

Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County Policy Recommendations on Addressing Homelessness in San Bernardino County

During February 2007, Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County (CAPSBC) commissioned Applied Survey Research to conduct the second San Bernardino County Homeless Census and Survey. The comprehensive study, conducted with the financial support of ten cities, the County of San Bernardino and private donors, was a follow-up to the first ever CAPSBC San Bernardino County Homeless Census and Survey, which was released in 2003. A bi-annual census is required under the terms of the McKinney-Vento Act so that local Continuums of Care can have reliable data on the homeless population in order to plan comprehensive local solutions to the problem of homelessness.

Based upon the results of the 2007 San Bernardino County Homeless Census and Survey, CAPSBC believes there are several specific actions that must be undertaken by those parties who are concerned about the issue of Homelessness in our community. Using the existing San Bernardino County Homeless Coalition Continuum of Care as a foundation, the following policies will set the stage for the next phase in the movement to reduce and eventually eliminate homelessness in San Bernardino County. These policies are consistent with the policy mandates of the National Alliance to End Homelessness, a nonpartisan organization committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States.

- **Creation of a 10-year plan to end homelessness.** The process begins with an inventory of existing beds in the network, a catalog of services and providers, and a compilation of funding devoted to the homeless population from all sources, public and private. The community must then establish a set of strategies focused on ending homelessness. A wide range of players¹ must make funding and implementation commitments to these strategies. The plan must have a Housing First approach that helps people back into permanent housing as quickly as possible, and links them with mainstream services to support them in maintaining their new housing and stabilizing themselves economically. Specifically addressing the approximately 6,000-bed shortfall² in emergency shelters and transitional housing, the plan must include a strategy for creating an interim housing system that facilitates rapid access to permanent housing with appropriate supports. At least 500 rental units³ that are affordable to the people with the very lowest income must be added to the market each year for ten years to eliminate the shortfall in available beds.

Based on a review of best practices of local planning authorities across the nation, the vital elements of the plan are: 1) An emergency homelessness prevention program that includes rent, mortgage, and utility assistance, case management, landlord or lender intervention, and other strategies to prevent eviction and homelessness; 2) A shelter and transitional housing system that is organized to minimize the length of time people remain homeless, and the number of times they become homeless; 3) Housing search and housing placement services

available to rapidly re-house all people losing their housing or who are homeless and who want permanent housing; 4) Mainstream programs that provide care and services to low-income people and consistently assesses and responds to their housing needs, ensuring that public institutions (hospitals, prisons, jails, mental health facilities) are discharging people into appropriate housing linked with appropriate services; 5) An outreach and engagement system designed to reduce barriers and encourage homeless people to enter housing with services. CAPSBC estimates 12-18 months of work by as many as 100 organizations and programs to prepare, finalize and approve the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in San Bernardino County.

- **Formal commitment of County, City, Community- and Faith-Based Organizations** Leaders from the County, the Cities and Community Organizations must make official their commitment to the collaboration through formal agreements. Agreements should include commitments of dollars and human resources, along with joint planning, grant writing and other fundraising efforts. Providing comprehensive services to homeless populations frequently means service providers in neighboring cities and jurisdictions must work jointly for the best solution for the client. Available housing in one city, combined with employment in another and social services in a third city, all tied together by public transportation, is a common scenario. Programs must have portability across the county, and that requires close coordination between cities and towns, the County of San Bernardino, and community organizations. This client-centered approach to service delivery provides flexibility, closes service gaps and offers the best chance for client success.
- **Fundraising** The final key is funding. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) makes a yearly funding allocation to San Bernardino County through the SuperNOFA process. San Bernardino County's application must be comprehensive and consistently excellent for the San Bernardino County Continuum of Care to win every available dollar during each annual funding round. Once an agency is awarded a contract for services, it must have the support of local authorities to ensure a housing development or service center can be built in the timeframe mandated by the terms of the HUD contract. Private Foundations are also funding projects for the Homeless. For example, the Conrad Hilton Foundation has awarded \$20 million over 12 years to the Corporation for Supportive Housing and has galvanized a national partnership of other foundations to raise additional funding for the National Alliance to End Homelessness. The San Bernardino County Continuum of Care must forge relationships with the Corporation for Supportive Housing and strengthen ties with the National Alliance to End Homelessness to establish partnerships on specific project initiatives, and must also cultivate associations within the foundation community, in particular those foundations with a programmatic focus on addressing homelessness.

Since 1991, the San Bernardino County Homeless Coalition, has been the foundation for addressing homelessness in this county. With the results of the 2007 Homeless Count, the time is right to



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establish a community-wide partnership that is inclusive, emphasizes collaboration, and maximizes our collective energy and expertise to solve this problem. We applaud and support the County of San Bernardino action to establish a countywide partnership to address homelessness.

Notes:

1. Suggested partners include elected officials, local mental health department, mental health providers, local public health department, health care providers, state/local corrections department, local veterans affairs department, local employment department, employment services providers, employers, local substance abuse department, substance abuse providers, homeless assistance providers, local public assistance department, local housing department, nonprofit housing developers/operators, for-profit housing developers/operators.
2. [Total homeless counted] {minus} [Number of people counted in shelters and transitional housing, assuming full capacity] {equals} [shortfall]; $7,331 - 1,220 = 6,111$
3. Assumes a 10-year goal of adding 5,000 affordable rental units to the market. 10% of the goal of 5,000 equals 500 rental units per year.